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NSC BRIEFING

SOUTH KOREAN ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE TRUCE

ARMY Declass/Release Instructions On File

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Recently President Rhee has seized several opportunities to reiterate [REDACTED] his earlier declarations that he cannot be bound by a truce which would leave Communists occupying North Korea, and that at the end of January he will feel free to resume fighting, with the United States at his side he hopes, but alone if necessary. On 12 October he told Ambassador Briggs that if the Chinese Communists are still in Korea on 25 January, South Korea would feel free to resume the fighting, that he expected the US to be at his side, and that he would "rather accept national dishonor than slow strangulation." On the same day, in the presence of the Commanding General of the 5th Air Force, Rhee stated that if the conference fails, South Korea will advance to the Yalu, "with US help if possible, without if necessary." He added: "The ROK will fight. If we unify by such an advance, well and good; if

we fail, Korea will be unified anyway under the Communists.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~
SECURITY INFORMATION

- 2 -

and we Koreans will have committed suicide."

Despite these statements, it seems likely that Rhee has not yet made any decision regarding ROK actions after 90 days and that, regardless of what he says in the interim, his ultimate decision will be heavily influenced by events which transpire between now and 25 January. According to General Taylor, ROK military commanders would obey orders to march north only with the greatest reluctance, but that the US would be remiss in not informing Rhee soon of our refusal to support unilateral action.

Rhee has, however, taken several recent steps to place ROK military forces at his direct disposal. He plans to transfer one ROK division from the 8th Army to participate in an anti-guerrilla campaign to begin on 1 November -- a questionable operation since there are probably less than 1,000 bandits still operating in the south. He has established a coast guard, and plans to transfer six sub-chasers from the ROK navy, and hence from UNC control. He also recently established

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~
SECURITY INFORMATION

- 3 -

militia, which will give him, along with the national police, an effective apparatus for independent action.

The South Korean government believes that the ROK cannot achieve real security so long as its prime objective -- control over the whole of Korea -- is not attained. Despite the UNC, the ROK can start armed action which would disrupt the truce and perhaps evoke full-scale hostilities at any time. Rhee probably has enough following to allow him to begin unilateral military action.

Once Rhee is free of his 90-day commitment or certain of the futility of the political conference, his decision to renew the fighting will be based on whether he believes such action would involve the US in full-scale hostilities. He believes that the US cannot stop him unilaterally from starting military action against the Communists, and that the US probably could not stay out ^{if} ~~if~~ this action provoked a significant Communist military reaction. Even if there were slight chance of US

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~TOP SECRET~~
~~SECURITY INFORMATION~~

- 4 -

involvement, Rhee would hope to gain eventual full support in commencing military operations. If Rhee were absolutely convinced that US involvement were not forthcoming, he would probably avoid independent military action, but would seek to stop the political conference to prevent unacceptable agreements and to keep US ^{ive} protecting forces in South Korea.

~~TOP SECRET~~
~~SECURITY INFORMATION~~